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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [CN](#) [XA](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: CHINA/AFRICA: FRENCH THINK-TANK DIRECTOR WANTS TO
DELIVER "TOUGHER MESSAGE" TO CHINESE

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[C](#). 06 PARIS 5733

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Classified By: Kim Krhounek, Acting Political Counselor, 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: French think-tank director Francois Gere (PROTECT) wants to deliver a "tougher message" to Chinese interlocutors during his regular consultations in Beijing on foreign policy issues. Gere said that Chinese behavior in Africa typifies an increasingly aggressive Chinese pursuit of its own objectives with little regard for problems it may cause abroad, or potential damage to its own image in the countries where it is invested. Gere's exchanges with the Chinese often occur during "private" meetings on the margins of conferences he attends in China, characterized by detailed questioning by Chinese officials who he believes are intelligence officers, in sessions that can continue into the following day. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Francois Gere (PROTECT) is the Director of the Paris-based "Institut francais d'analyse strategique" (IFAS, or French Institute for Strategic Analysis). A foreign policy expert with particular expertise in pol/mil and trans-Atlantic security issues, Gere also teaches courses in international relations for select members of France's senior officer corps. During a meeting on January 26, Gere explained that he regularly attended conferences in China at the invitation of organizers to offer French and European views on a range of subjects, and that he was preparing for one such conference. He sought U.S. views on China's role in Africa. We shared our general outlook, derived largely from the analysis contained in ref C, a 2006 cable on China in Africa whose themes remain current.

China Needs to Practice Good Citizenship Abroad

[1](#)3. (C) Gere said that he had come to similar conclusions about China's Africa policy. He noted China's aggressive pursuit of resources; its packaged deals that use almost exclusively Chinese materials, manpower, and technology in carrying out a project (with a resulting loss of local employment opportunities and technology transfer); Chinese indifference to host-country political and human rights concerns (under the guise of "non-interference"); the development of a Chinese diaspora in Africa with potentially significant effects on local populations; and China's cynical attempts to exploit Third World solidarity with its African

partners even though China is now a global superpower. Gere went on to mention the apparent wealth China is willing to spread among Africa's elite to ensure attainment of its objectives, even if very little of this wealth trickles down to the general population.

14. (C) Gere noted that there have already been several African backlashes in response to China's increasing presence in Africa, and he predicted that more could well follow if China continued its present methods, which did not, in Gere's view, include a "social consciousness" component. The Chinese did not seem to realize that they risked being viewed as a new type of colonizer and that resentment against them could build quickly and could turn a lot uglier than had anti-colonial movements of earlier times, especially considering the leverage enjoyed by Africans (over raw materials coveted by China) as well as a possible lack of inhibition among many Africans to resort to violence directed against "outsiders" like the Chinese.

15. (C) Gere said that he intended to tell the Chinese during his next visit that, using Africa as an example, China had to develop relations that involved a "give" element to balance out the already healthy "take" aspect of China's presence abroad. This message, he would stress, would be for China's own long-term good if it wanted to remain welcome in places like Africa. To counter the Chinese claim that it "gives" as much as it "takes," Gere said he would advise them that paying a national leader a large sum for a raw materials concession or building a new sports stadium or concert hall did not then give China license to do whatever it wanted. China had to act as a responsible citizen with respect to a range of issues -- labor, environment, anti-corruption, rule of law -- if it wanted to maintain a semblance of good

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relations with the African people.

16. (C) The message about being a better citizen in Africa was part of a larger message Gere said he felt increasingly obliged to make. He said that the self-confidence China had developed during the early part of its recent boom was now turning into arrogance and an attitude that China could do no wrong and owed no one an explanation or an apology. This was not healthy, for either China or the rest of the world. Gere said he would try to tell the Chinese that its aggressive approach on all fronts and the umbrage it took if it perceived even the slightest criticism were major turn-offs that could cause people everywhere to view China more as a "problem" than as a helpful and useful "partner." Gere conceded that if he conveyed this message to the Chinese it would likely have little real effect (other than to antagonize his interlocutors) but he said it was a message he felt compelled to send. The Chinese might begin to listen if other outside parties (whom the Chinese considered worthwhile enough to invite to their conferences) conveyed similar messages.

Long Discussion Sessions

17. (C/NF) Gere said that his discussions in China had taken on a familiar form. He usually goes to China to participate in formal conferences where he gives a presentation on a given subject (which can vary widely from conference to conference). Then, after a conference session concludes, his interlocutors suggest an off-the-record discussion. Gere said he was convinced that these sessions were conducted by members of China's intelligence services. The talks can go on well into the early morning hours, fueled on the Chinese side by large quantities of cigarettes. The discussions consist almost entirely of Gere being questioned about a subject and can resume the next day (often in a morning session if the conference has ended). As Gere described these sessions, it appeared that they are quite one-sided, with Gere doing most of the talking and the Chinese doing most of the questioning. He said that the discussions are

always in English, with an interpreter translating for the Chinese present who do not know English. He has never had a discussion in French. Gere observed that he knows when a subject is exhausted when his interlocutors stop asking him about it and move on to another topic. He also commented that when a morning session follows a late-night session on the same topic, his interlocutors at the morning session ask follow-up questions that indicate that what he said at the preceding late-night session had been carefully analyzed. He commented that "in China, the machinery of state never stops."

18. (C/NF) Gere remarked that, while his Chinese interlocutors are pleasant, they are all business. Not once, he said, has a Chinese interlocutor relaxed, suggested they have a beer together, or converse as one individual to another. There has been no attempt to develop a personal rapport with Gere, who commented that the Chinese do not seem to understand that establishing a friendship could increase one's willingness to open up to them. That too, he observed, was an element of their single-mindedness and also one of their blind spots.

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